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SUBJECT: USUN ROME CO-HOSTS HIGH LEVEL FOOD SECURITY EVENT ON HAITI

1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified. Not for dissemination outside the U.S. Government.

Summary

2. (U) The U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome, joined by the Haitian and Brazilian Missions, co-hosted a high-level meeting 'Supporting a Haitian-Led Food Security Program' on February 12 at the World Food Program (WFP) headquarters. Designed to highlight the need for medium and long-term financing for Haiti's agricultural sector, the event was well received by the many participants from other Missions, NGOs, private sector and the media. Haiti's Agriculture Minister Joanas Gue presented Haiti's \$700 million agriculture plan in his keynote address, followed by remarks from WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director General Jacques Diouf, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) President Kanayo Nwanze, State Department Chief of Staff and Counselor Cheryl Mills, Brazil's Coordinator-General of International Actions in the Fight Against Hunger in the Ministry of Foreign Relations Milton Rondo, and Dominican Republic Agriculture Minister Salvador Jimenez. Noteworthy moments included the Haitian Ambassador Benoit's emotionally charged opening remarks that drew tears from many in the audience, the announcement of a new Haiti Task Force established by the Rome-based UN Agencies, FAO Director General Diouf's critical comments on funding for agriculture in Haiti under the UN Flash Appeal, and a Haiti Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) proposal by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the World Bank. END SUMMARY.

Background

3. (U) The high-level meeting was held exactly one month after the devastating earthquake struck Haiti. One of the primary objectives of the meeting was to gain commitments by parties to develop and implement a coordinated Haitian-led food security plan. Ideally this plan would include agriculture, rural development, and safety nets. With death totals estimated between 220,000 to 270,000 and untold infrastructural damage,

the earthquake, in FAO Director General Diouf's words, 'has destroyed all the headway' that had been made in the fight against poverty in Haiti. WFP Executive Director Sheeran called the disaster the 'most complex emergency' that the WFP had ever supported. The event focused on building consensus for a Haitian-led agriculture plan that places agriculture as a leading sector for Haiti's economic development.

Components of Haiti's New Agricultural Plan

14. (U) Outlined by Haitian Agriculture Minister Joanas Gue, Haiti's new agriculture plan is centered on two key objectives: produce more food and create more jobs. Gue emphasized that with secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy badly damaged, agriculture must take a lead role in jump-starting and redeveloping the economy. The major components of the new plan include: integrate food production and humanitarian work; increase availability of inputs; rehabilitate infrastructure; improve management of water basins; support reforestation (with a focus on tree crops) and animal husbandry; and bolster the marketing of agricultural production. The Haitian Agriculture Minister was confident that the new plan could produce 40-45 million person days of work. The cost of the program is projected at \$700 million over a period of three years and will target areas with large inflows of migrants as well as areas that have the highest potential agricultural output. While acknowledging the importance of a medium to long term agriculture plan, Gue also stressed the importance of immediate action as the first and primary agriculture season, which accounts for 60 percent of Haiti's food production, will begin March 1.

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Coordinated Relief

15. (U) The three UN Rome-based Agencies announced a new 'Task Force for Food Security in Haiti' designed to 'support the GOH in the implementation of a concerted, coherent, and targeted, immediate and longer-term food security strategy that integrates agricultural production and social safety nets.' The heads of the three agencies pledged that they would work together on a daily basis, combining the expertise and resources of their agencies. They recognized 'the need to create social safety nets to stimulate the economy in urban and rural areas; to re-start urgently needed school feeding; and to ensure that the coming planting seasons are as productive as possible. In the longer term, agriculture sector policies and funding frameworks are required to pave the way for enhanced production and productivity.' For example, the three agencies now are coordinating their efforts to provide seeds for next month's planting season, with IFAD providing funding, FAO purchasing seeds and giving technical expertise, and WFP assisting with distribution.

Diouf Raises Concern on Lack of Funding

16. (U) In his remarks, FAO Director General Jacques Diouf raised concern over the lack of funding that has been committed to and made available to the FAO through the UN Flash Appeal. Diouf noted the importance that the GOH had placed on agriculture in the recovery process and expressed strong concern that only \$23 million of the \$576 million Haiti Flash Appeal (as of February 12) was designated for agriculture and, of that amount, only eight percent had actually been funded.

Counselor Mills' Intervention

17. (U) Counselor Mills said that both Haiti and food security have figured prominently in U.S. foreign policy and are a good example of the combined role of diplomacy and development that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have pursued over the past

year. She urged the international community to meet its pre-earthquake commitments and redouble its efforts to work together with a single purpose, under a coordinated plan and under the leadership of Haiti. Mills recalled the tentative progress Haiti had made before the earthquake and encouraged donors and UN agencies alike to build off of the hope and opportunity that still exists in Haiti, particularly in the development of the agriculture sector.

¶8. (U) Counselor Mills explained that, prior to the earthquake, a joint U.S.-Haitian team determined that a robust agriculture development strategy would need to focus on three core elements: Grow More, Save More, and Sell More. Now, after the earthquake, Mills said it would be necessary to include four additional areas of investment in the agricultural sector: rebuilding the Ministry of Agriculture; enhancing coordination through rapid and transparent information exchange; supporting an integrated strategy between Haiti and the Dominican Republic; and promoting job creation in agriculture. An expanded strategy would also have to take into consideration the GOH stated goal of decentralizing the country and drawing people out of Port au Prince. (The full text of Counselor Mills' statement is available on the Mission website: <http://usunrome.usmission.gov>)

World Bank and IADB Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Haiti

¶9. (SBU) The World Bank proposed a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for Haiti. Developed in collaboration with the IADB, the MDTF could direct funds to either budget or project support. The Fund would be governed by a steering committee of Haitians and donors, would allocated according to a common needs assessment, avoid working on a project-by-project basis, and

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prohibit earmarked donations.

Significant Media Interest

¶10. (U) There was substantial media interest in the high-level meeting. Twenty-one journalists attended, including representatives from international news agencies [AP, CNN, AFP, APTN, NPR, DPA (Deutsche Presse-Agentur), and Europa Press] as well as from several Italian news agencies [RAI International, Radio RAI, Ansa (Italy's leading news agency), La7 (privately-owned center-left newscast), and Terra]. The entire event was also live-streamed via webcast on the web sites of USUN-Rome, WFP, FAO, and IFAD. It is estimated that over 4,000 viewers accessed the webcast from one of the four sites during the event.

¶11. (U) Most media coverage focused on the GOH's \$700 million plan to meet long-term food production needs and create jobs for the thousands of Haitians who have fled the quake-stricken capital. Coverage also centered on FAO DG Diouf's complaint about the lack of support for the agricultural component of the UN Flash Appeal as well as the announcement of FAO, WFP, and IFAD having established a task force to help the Government of Haiti implement a food security strategy focusing on both immediate needs and long-term rural development.

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